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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

FOR NEA/I GRANTS OFFICER MARIE MOSER

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SUBJECT: UN LAYS GROUNDWORK FOR IRAQ ANTI-CORRUPTION PROGRAM

REF: A. BAGHDAD 04058  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 00010  
[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 02122

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The United Nations Development (UNDP) program held in January in Amman the first workshop as part of its 2008-2010 anti-corruption program for Iraq, which comes with the support of US funding. Statisticians and experts in survey design from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) held "train the trainer" exercises with Iraqi officials on how to conduct self-assessments of Iraq's compliance with the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, as well as levels of perceived corruption in Iraq. These assessments, slated to be completed by summer, will contribute to the GOI's comprehensive anti-corruption strategy. The Iraqis' enthusiastic participation at the Amman workshop augurs well for implementation of the UN program generally. End Summary.

CONFERENCE KICKS OFF ANTI-CORRUPTION PROGRAM  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) UNDP, in concert with UNODC, sponsored a working-level conference in Amman January 4-8 to launch its anti-corruption program for Iraq, which comes with the support of USD 8 million in reprogrammed Iraq Reconstruction Funds awarded in September 2008. The first prong of the program (Ref A) will conduct a data-based assessment of corruption in Iraq with the aim of developing a comprehensive national anti-corruption strategy that will bring Iraq into compliance with the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), to which Baghdad acceded in April 2008. The second part of the program will develop anti-corruption capacities at the governate level in Iraq.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The primary audience of the Amman conference were Iraqi representatives from COSIT, the state-run statistics organization, which will spearhead data collection for the corruption survey. Also in attendance were representatives from the BSA, Commission on Integrity (COI), the Ministry of Planning, and the Central Bank of Iraq. Statisticians and experts in survey design from UNODC in Vienna held "train the trainer" exercises with Iraqi officials on how to conduct self-assessments. Two specific tools taught were the Gap Analysis Program (GAP), which reviews institutional deficiencies in Iraq compared to requirements under the UNCAC, and an anti-corruption "self-assessment" survey, which will analyze perceived levels of corruption by both the Iraqi populace and GOI officials. UNODC, in concert with Iraqi officials, aims to carry out the GAP analysis and anti-corruption survey by summer 2009. UNDP will use the data from these assessments to work with GOI stakeholders to establish a national anti-corruption strategy and plug key deficiencies in UNCAC compliance.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Meeting with ACCO January 28, UNDP Iraq Governance

Director Sylvia Fletcher said she was very "heartened" by the positive response from COSIT director Dr. Mehdi al-Alaq to the UN program. (Note: Al-Alaq is the brother of Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, Ali Alaq. End Note.) Fletcher said she was "pleasantly satisfied" that the Iraqis had embraced the idea of being custodians for the country's anti-corruption data, which she underscored was critical for the long-term viability of the country's anti-corruption efforts.

15. (SBU) With the support of the US funding, the UN intends to hire three full-time staff to implement its Iraq anti-corruption program. UNODC completed in December its selection for its slot, a position which requires legal expertise regarding implementation of the UNCAC. However, the top two candidates turned down the offer for other positions, necessitating another round of hiring. UNODC has re-advertised the position and, in the meantime, has pulled staff from its Nigeria anti-corruption program to fill in until the full-time position is filled. Regarding the two UNDP full-time staffers, Sylvia Fletcher said UNDP was prepared to make offers within the next 10 days. Once the offers have been accepted, Fletcher expected a 30 day gap until the new staff would report for duty.

16. (SBU) The Iraqi participants at the conference made clear their enthusiasm for the UN program. They doubtless plan to weave elements from the program into the anti-corruption strategy that the GOI is currently formulating (Ref B).

GAINING TRACTION: INTERNATIONALLY AND  
WITH SELECT IRAQI INSTITUTIONS

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17. (SBU) UNDP's Sylvia Fletcher noted two other efforts by the GOI to upgrade its international commitments. She said Iraq was actively involved in a global working group on UNCAC compliance. During a meeting of the working group in Vienna in September, Iraqi officials from the COI and BSA took part in a familiarization tour of the various departments of UNODC with which it will be working as part of the UN anti-corruption program, to include the anti-money laundering and statistics departments. Fletcher also praised Iraq's participation in meetings regarding the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

18. (SBU) Fletcher thought that the BSA, as Iraq's oldest and best-established anti-corruption body, would likely lead the way among the various concerned institutions (BSA, COI, IGs) in terms of involvement in the UN program. She stressed that BSA chief Dr. Abdulbasit al-Turki was "on board" with their program and that the BSA's current cooperation with entities in the Kurdistan region were a "good test" for expanding national anti-corruption efforts to northern Iraq. Similarly, Fletcher praised the institutional framework present in the Iraqi courts. The reason for the dearth of anti-corruption cases, she opined, was the lack of coordination among institutions (reported Ref C) that lead few anti-corruption cases to make their way to an investigative judge in the first place. Fletcher underscored that bottlenecks at the COI were not the specific fault of COI Commissioner Judge Rahim al-Ugaili; rather, it was the overall structure of the system and discombobulated coordination therein that prevented more cases from being tried. Noting that contacts at the Central Criminal Court of Iraq (CCC-I) had accused COI staff of being incompetent and corrupt themselves, Fletcher said she had not been able to come to a conclusion whether this was true or whether the problem was the structure of the overall system.

COMMENT  
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¶9. (SBU) The Iraqis' participation at the Amman gathering suggests their genuine interest in benefiting from the UN program. Our sense is that, as the GOI develops its anti-corruption strategy, it will be receptive to modifying it in light of the UN program as it unfolds.  
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